

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti
May 5, 2014

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome President Guelleh and his delegation here today.

I had an opportunity to visit Djibouti when I was a Senator, before I was elected President, and saw firsthand the importance of U.S. cooperation with Djibouti. Obviously, Camp Lemonnier is extraordinarily important not only to our work throughout the Horn of Africa, but throughout the region. And we very much appreciate the hospitality that the Djiboutians provide, but we also are very appreciative of the opportunity to meet with the President here today and to deepen this relationship further.

Maybe I should get a quick translation.

[At this point, the President motioned for the interpreter to begin the translation.]

President Guelleh. J'ai compris, j'ai compris.

President Obama. Okay. Today we'll be discussing a wide range of issues. In addition to our security cooperation, we're deeply interested in working with the President around development and issues of being able to expand education and health care work that we're already doing with the Government of Djibouti. We're extremely interested in regional issues, and we want to say how much we appreciate the work that Djibouti has done through AMISOM in Somalia, an area where there have been continuing, growing threats not only to the Somali people, but al-Shabaab obviously has carried out operations throughout East Africa. And there's a significant presence of soldiers from Djibouti who are participating in the multinational force that has been able to push back al-Shabaab's control over large portions of Somalia.

Today, in addition to announcing the long-term lease that we are signing with Djibouti, we also hope that we can discuss the Africa Leaders Summit that I'll be hosting this year. We appreciate the President's participation, and we're going to be looking at his advice on a range of issues that we can work on together. And we're going to continue to engage with the Government of Djibouti around issues related to human rights in the region. Human trafficking continues to be a concern. There is an action plan that the Government of Djibouti has put in place, and we want to find ways in which we can assist in implementing.

So overall, this is a critical facility that we maintain in Djibouti. We could not do it without the President's cooperation. We're grateful for him agreeing for a long-term presence there. We look forward to deepening cooperation that benefits the people of Djibouti as well as the people of the United States of America.

So, welcome. Thank you.

President Guelleh. Mr. President, thank you very much. I'm very happy to be in Washington, DC, today, and I thank you for the warm welcome that you have extended to me and my delegation.

I'd very much like to reinforce—continue to reinforce relations between Djibouti and the United States. And I would like to thank President Obama once more for having shown such a

willingness to receive us here as the President of Djibouti. I also want to say like to say that our relation is a relation of strategic partnership. And I not only thank the President for that, but also for everything the President is doing, his cooperation in terms of development, our political develop—our development policy in Djibouti is very much helped by the President in terms of, as he said himself, health care education and especially, in our case, food security. And I think that what's important here is that the President has a vision. He has a vision for the development of Africa in general and for our region in particular. And I thank you for that vision, Mr. President.

The fact that we welcomed the U.S. forces in our country show our support for international peace and for peace in our region as well. As you know, Djibouti is not only taking part in AMISOM, but we are also present in Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, Western Sahara, and soon enough, in the Central African Republic. We do that all for peace in the world and in particular for peace in Africa. So I am very happy to be here today to continue to reinforce our partnership and our relationship.

The President. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). President Guelleh spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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